

# MOLD . . . in my home?

**Mold is a simple, microscopic organism found indoors, outdoors, on plants, food, dry leaves or other organic material. Most people have seen mold as green or black fuzzy growth on food.**

**What are mold spores?** The seeds or reproductive particles of mold are called *spores*. They are very tiny and lightweight which allows them to travel through the air and into your home.

Each spore that germinates can give rise to new mold growth, which in turn can produce millions of spores.

**How does mold grow?** Mold needs moisture, oxygen and food sources such as leaves, wood, paper or dirt to grow.

Mold will grow in the home in such places as damp closets, bathrooms, house plants, air conditioners, humidifiers, garbage pails, mattresses, upholstered furniture or old foam pillows.

**How do I know if I have a problem?**

If you can see or smell mold, you have a mold problem. Mold has an earthy or musty odor. Look for areas that have had water leakage or for discoloration in ceilings or walls.

**Is mold harmful to my health?**

Most people are not affected by exposure to mold. A few people develop a hypersensitivity to molds that may have the same symptoms as people with allergies. These symptoms can be rashes or respiratory problems, which vary from a cough to an asthma attack. Persons with a weak immune system can become infected by molds.

## What can I do?

Mold should be removed as soon as it appears and by someone who is free of allergies and symptoms. Use a non-ammonia detergent and hot water. Dampen the area first to avoid releasing spores into the air, then scrub all contaminated surfaces. Rinse with clean water. Disinfect the area with a solution of 1/4 cup household bleach per gallon of water. Let dry naturally.

## How can I control mold in my home?

Remove the source of the moisture. If the source is a leaking pipe, it should be repaired. You may need to contact a professional to detect the source of the moisture problem.

Good housekeeping and maintenance are important. As soon as any mold appears, clean and disinfect the area. Any structure that is kept clean, well ventilated and in good repair should be relatively free of mold problems.

Proper ventilation is important. Use fans or open windows, especially bathroom windows.

## Where can I get more information?

California Department of Health Services  
Indoor Air Quality Program  
850 Marina Bay Parkway  
(M.S. G365 / EHLB)  
Richmond, CA 94804  
E-mail: [www.cal-iaq.org](http://www.cal-iaq.org)

*Repairing Your Flooded Home*  
available from American Red Cross



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